

THE LUTHERAN CHURCH OF CHRIST IN NIGERIA



Address: No 1 Hospital Road
P.O. Box 21, Numan
Adamawa State, Nigeria
Website: www.lccn.org.ng

Office Email: lccnmailbox@gmail.com, mails@lccn.org.ng
Email: musa.pantifilibus@lccn.org.ng
Phone: (+234) 7033602052 (8077574312)

A CALL TO ACTION ON THE MINDLESS BLOODSHED IN NIGERIA:

A JOINT COMMUNIQUE BY THE BISHOPS' COUNCIL AND THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE LUTHERAN CHURCH OF CHRIST IN NIGERIA (LCCN) ON THE CURRENT SITUATION OF VIOLENCE IN NIGERIA *TUESDAY, 23RD JANUARY 2018*

1. Preamble

The Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria (the "LCCN") has been in existence as a church since and has its headquarters in Numan, Adamawa State, in the north-eastern region of Nigeria. Numan is a confluence town, because of the unique meeting point of rivers Gongola and Benue. The rivers provided navigation path for the pioneer missionary from Denmark, later America and others, who contributed immensely to the development of the entire region through preaching, education, medical care and other social services and human development programs.

Our profound recognition of the sanctity of life and full knowledge that life must be protected not destroyed at will, informed our decision to issue this communiqué. We out rightly abhor any act of violence and destruction of life. As a church body that has the largest concentration of its members in the north-eastern region of Nigeria, we together with other churches within the north-east zone have been at the receiving end of violent attacks from "Boko Haram" brutal insurgents and the recent murderous activities of some Fulani herders. However these heinous activities are described, we are "victim churches" and no longer feel safe whenever and wherever we gather for our religious activities.

2. Our fervent condolences

As a Christian church we are called to express and translate into concrete action authentic care, compassion and consolation to all humankind regardless of the religious leaning of the intended recipient. Therefore we express *fervent condolences* to all those directly and indirectly affected by the horrific acts of the Fulani dangerous herders which has heightened, as they seem to have been emboldened to continue to murder at will in most recent months. We pray our loving God of life to comfort all those affected in a very special way. To the many that have been displaced, we as church shall continue together with other churches and humanitarian agencies, to

identify with you in any way possible. It is our prayers that in no distant time, you are able to return to your homes.

3. *Our concern: so much destruction of human life?*

We are ***very much concerned*** by the recent and ongoing violent attacks on innocent farmers, mostly in Christian communities, in a number of states in Nigeria, with Adamawa, Taraba, Benue, Plateau, Nasarawa and Kaduna states bearing the brunt of the heinous acts of the Fulani herders, who seemingly take delight in shedding blood unabated. In less than three months since November last year, it is estimated that over 5,000 persons have been brutally murdered, thousands of people dislocated from their villages and towns, and unquantifiable sources of livelihood and valuables destroyed in attacks carried out in Adamawa, Taraba and Benue states alone. These Fulani herders often launch attacks on unsuspecting communities, raid and raze down properties with fire and hack to death anyone on sight. This dangerous situation is often softened with the language of “conflict between farmers and Fulani herders.” NO! It is more than “conflict between farmers and herders” when communities are constantly attacked at midnight in this manner.

We are very much disturbed by such acts of terrorism that occur in a continuous frequency that triggers many questions than answers: what is their agenda? Are we facing a form of ethnic cleansing (genocide) of other tribes to give way to a particular tribe? Where is our security as Nigerian citizens? How is it that these herders have easy access to reported sophisticated, high velocity weapons/rifles they are using to senselessly slaughter innocent people? Who is behind this agenda? Who is providing training to handle such weapons and where? A fighter jet was used to bomb a community in Numan that is supposed to be protected from these murderers, we ask why? Where then are we headed as a nation when we only hear of attacks literally on daily basis? How long should our villages that used to be safe places become soft targets of these killers? We are truly distraught by this horrendous situation.

4. *Acknowledgement of various efforts*

We ***acknowledge*** the various initiatives by different non-state actors toward mitigating the devastating impact of the premeditated violent attacks on harmless people/farmers. The faith based entities were not left out in the efforts to douse the tension and to prevent further killings by convening dialogues of life. But then, we ask, who should call these killers to order, to stop their monstrous activities? The umbrella association of the cattle breeders of Nigeria has continued to disassociate itself from the heartless herders. We are candidly perturbed by this babel of deceit and equating human life to a cattle's. Countless statements have been issued and press conferences called, but the killers have continued to launch attacks on communities. Should we then just keep quiet while lives are being destroyed? NO and never will we give up. We will not relent in our efforts aimed at promoting peace and peaceful coexistence, despite that many members of the Christian faith are barefacedly attacked and massacred, while the world watches.

5. *Government responsibility to protect life*

We *recognize* that the Nigerian Constitution saddles the government with the mandate and obligation to protect all citizens from aggression and any form of terror. But, where is the government when innocent citizens are murdered daily by assailants? Sometimes we are told they are foreigners. Foreigners with licence to come and murder Nigerians at will? If they are foreigners, where are they coming from? What restrains the government from carrying out this constitutional obligation? Could it be that the government is not acting due to the comments in media houses by some traditional rulers which appear in defense of the killers? Are the intelligent services incapacitated or complicit or not heeded to? Again, why a Nigeria Air Force fighter jet was bombs a community that was supposedly to have been shielded from the killer squad of Fulani herders.

6. *Our call for urgent action*

We call on the President Muhammadu Buhari, GCFR, and His government to as a matter of national urgency swing into more concrete action to bring to book these monstrous killers, unravel their sponsors and any other person or group that is complicit in these dastardly acts that led to the killing of many people and displacement of countless others. We would be left with no option but hold the government accountable for the unabated spilling of human blood. In any step taken to bring about peace, we strongly call on the government to not trample upon justice. For as the Bible in the book of Proverbs chapter 22:8 warns, “Whoever sows injustice reaps calamity...”

We call on the Africa Union, the European Union, the United Nations Security Council and the UN General Assembly to not turn the other way. They are finishing the people.

We call upon human rights organizations locally and globally to say No to the murders of innocent and armless citizens in Nigeria, in the name of herding animals.

We call upon the Ecumenical family globally and all peace loving persons across religions to stand with the people of Nigeria in search for peace and justice. This must never be allowed to continue.

7. *Our commitment and prayer*

We commit as a church to remain faithful to our mission of speaking truth to authority and contributing our quota to promoting justice and peace in society, human wellbeing and care for creation. We are repeatedly reminded by the biblical injunction of Micah 6:8 that says; “God has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? **To act justly, to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.**”

We conclude with a prayer of lament paraphrased from Psalm 143: *Hear our prayers, O Lord; give ear to our supplications in your faithfulness; answer us in your righteousness. For the enemy has pursued us, crushing our lives to the ground, making us sit in darkness like those long dead. Our hearts within us is appalled. Answer us quickly, O Lord; our spirit fail. Do not hide your face from us, or we shall be like those who go down to the pit. Save us, O Lord from our enemies;*

we have fled to you for refuge. Teach us to do your will, for you are our God. Let your good spirit lead us on a level path. We make this prayer through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Issued at the Headquarters of the Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria (LCCN) Numan, Adamawa State, Nigeria, on January 23, 2018.

Most Rev. Musa Panti Filibus, PhD
Archbishop, Chairman

Mr. Parisa N. Ishaku
Administrative Secretary